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ABSTRACT

The Kalamazoo College Foreign Study Program has been in operation since 1958 and continues to enroll 85% of its students for one, two, or three quarters. The program offers a wide variety of options in Europe, Latin America, and Africa. Administrative arrangements and supervision of the programs are done by the two directors of the program at Kalamazoo; local personnel are used abroad. Unlike many other programs, this one is endowed. This endowment makes it affordable for the college as well as for the students. The impact of the program can be seen in the curricular and extra-curricular activity at the college. For example, an on-campus African Studies program has been established whose presentations and programs attract a following both on and off campus. In addition to this program, a concentration in international commerce has been introduced, foreign language houses have been established, and a faculty member has been appointed to coordinate efforts to internationalize the campus. In the future, the benefits for such programs will not decrease, but the world economic siutation, the cost of education abroad, poor language preparation of students, and rising enrollments in foreign universities will all affect language programs abroad. (AMH)

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The Kalamazoo College Foreign Study Program: The Present and the Future.

Joe K. Fugate

Organized foreign study for Kalamazoo College undergraduates began in 1958 with the inauguration of non-credit summer academic programs in three European centers, (Caen, France; Bonn, Germany; Madrid, Spain). Outstanding underclassmen, selected partly on the basis of language aptitude and training without regard for academic major or class, were sent abroad to spend approximately nine weeks in one of the three centers living with families and studying the language, geography, history, literature, and art of the host country, and several more weeks traveling independently. All participants were supported financially by the S.R. Light Trust fund which provided scholarship aid.

Encouraged by the success of the summer program, which continued through 1962, the College arranged its new calendar to provide as an integral part of Kalamazoo undergraduate education a period of foreign study for as many students as desire and are qualified for such a program. A variety of program options were designed to serve the varied needs and abilities of Kalamazoo students. Although the different programs make different kinds of linguistic and other demands on the students, all have been designed to provide participants with the opportunity 1) to become acquainted in some depth with a culture (usually including language), a people, and an educational system different from their own, and 2) to participate in an academic experience which is both roughly comparable in quality to the work done on campus and, at the same time, enhanced by the environment in which it takes place.

In 1961 a new calendar, the so-called Kalamazoo plan, was inaugurated on campus. In September, 1962, 80 selected members of the Junior class (out of a total of approximately 190) entered the new Foreign Study Program on a pilot basis. Students studied in two centers in Germany and France, in one in South

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America, and in one in West Africa. In addition, a few individuals were located in Turkey and in England. A one quarter pilot group also studied in Münster, Germany, during the spring of 1963. A successful experience with these pilot groups led to further expansion. Arrangements were made to accommodate during the next fall (1963) all qualified members of the class of 1965 who wanted to participate, and approximately 86% of that class did participate during the academic year 1963-64. Two new centers were opened that year and individual students studied in a variety of locations attached to other recognized foreign study programs. Since then additional new programs have been opened and approximately 85% of each subsequent class has participated in the program.

Though participation in foreign study is not mandatory, it is regarded as an integral part of Kalamazoo College undergraduate education and one of the distinguishing features of the Kalamazoo plan. Foreign study at Kalamazoo has three features which distinguish it from similar programs at other institutions. 1) The extent of participation of Kalamazoo College graduates. Since the academic year 1963-64 approximately 85% of each subsequent graduating class has participated in the program. 2) The wide variety of program options, both in regard to location, duration, and place in the students' academic schedule. In a typical year Kalamazoo students study in programs in some 20-30 individual locations the world over. Options are available for one, two, and three quarter programs, with a breakdown of approximately 2/3 in two quarter programs , 30% in one-quarter programs, and the small remainder in three quarter options. Students may choose to go abroad in the fall and winter or the spring of their junior year, in the spring quarter of their sophomore year, or in special cases even during the senior year. 3) Degree of financial support. The

Kalamazoo College Foreign Study program is endowed, which makes it possible for financial aid for students to continue during the time the student spends overseas. In addition, income from the endowment provides financial support for administrative costs and gives the program a sound financial basis, all of which helps to keep down the costs to the participants. It is obvious that all of these features are in some ways interlinked; because there are a variety of options and sound financial support for the program, students find it attractive and participate in large numbers. Indeed, every survey in the last two decades has indicated that the attraction of the Foreign Study Program is one of the main reasons why the students come to Kalamazoo College.

Kalamazoo College has long subscribed to and supported the notion that one of the goals of studying abroad should be to integrate as fully as possible the student both academically and personally to the life of the host country. To this end Kalamazoo College has attempted, wherever possible, to attach students to foreign universities and to enroll them in ongoing courses at these institutions. Only in those cases where linguistic preparation or other considerations beyond the control of an American institution have made this impossible has Kalamazoo College set up special programs for its students or placed them in programs that are not integrated into institutions of higher learning abroad. All Kalamazoo College programs abroad make use of local personnel. There are no American program directors, nor do Kalamazoo College faculty regularly accompany groups of students abroad. All administrative arrangements, including direct contacts and supervision of the programs abroad, are made by the director and assistant director of Foreign Study at Kalamazoo College. This form of direct supervision requires frequent travel on the part of the program administrators, who make from between three to five trips abroad a year. Such an administrative arrangement is very cost effective and provides for the continuity much needed in foreign study programs.

A particular programmatic feature of the Kalamazoo program for over two decades has been the relationship of Kalamazoo College with a number of universities in Black Africa. As far as we are able to ascertain, Kalamazoo College was the first American institution of higher learning to send its students for study to African universities on a regular basis. At one time or another, Kalamazoo College students have studied at eight different Anglophone and Francophone African universities. In this connection Kalamazoo College has acted as an agent college for the Great Lakes Colleges Association and has regularly accepted students from these institutions, as well as other institutions (a total of 102), for participation in its programs in Africa.

The impact of the Foreign Study Program at Kalamazoo College can be seen in virtually every aspect of the curricular and extra-curricular activity at the institution. The positive effect it has had upon the institution and its community exceeded even the furthest expectations of its originators. Since a detailed account of the results of this program exceed the scope of this presentation, a few examples will suffice to illustrate some of the prominent payoffs. The Foreign Study emphasis in Africa has led to the establishment of an on-campus African Studies Program which in addition to appropriate courses in a variety of areas features a series of lectures, films, and other Africa-related events on a twice a week basis for the entire ten weeks of the summer quarter. These events not only attract a loyal following from on-campus, but also from the community at large. The foreign language programs have profited tremendously from the fact that not only do foreign language majors study abroad, but also students from every other discipline, including the natural sciences. The advanced literature classes, all taught in the foreign language, have sizeable enrollments which also include non-language majors. Foreign language films and lectures in foreign languages draw large audiences who are without difficulty

able to understand the film dialog or the speaker. As a result of the Foreign Study Program the concentration in international commerce, which also requires a high level of competence in at least one language, has been initiated by the Economics Department. Two foreign language houses, one for German and one for French, are currently operating. Use of the foreign language is mandatory in all public areas of the houses. The popularity of these among majors and non-majors alike is so great that there are currently waiting lists for entrance into the houses. The faculty as a whole has recognized the importance of the Foreign Study Program by giving its approval to a plan to internationalize the on-campus curriculum in every way possible. To this end one faculty member has been granted released time from his teaching responsibilities in order to coordinate these efforts. Last and certainly but not least, the effect which the program has had upon the personal and professional development of countless Kalamazoo College graduates can hardly be overemphasized. Many Kalamazoo College graduates have made career or personal decisions which are directly related to the experiences and/or contacts which they made while studying abroad.

Despite the well known economic problems facing all of American higher education, interest in the study abroad program at Kalamazoo has remained high. There has thus far been no decline in the overall participation. Some shifts in interest from one area to another are of course inevitable and nothing out of the ordinary. The political situation in some developing countries and program costs in some areas influence the students' choice from the available options. If the economic squeeze continues, students are likely to prefer a shorter rather than a longer period abroad.

Attempting to predict the trends of the future for foreign study programs is as essential and hazardous as it is for higher education as a whole. Without any rank order, I want to attempt to identify some of the areas that are going to affect study abroad in the future.

1. For want of a better word, I refer to this issue as transfer of credits. For most Americans to be able to afford studying abroad, it must be possible for the academic work done while abroad to be recognized on the home campus. Because of the decline of enrollments in the U.S. and financial squeeze which the entire economic situation is exerting upon higher education, institutions are becoming increasingly reluctant to grant credit to their students for work done elsewhere. Many institutions have already set a quota limiting the number of students that may at any one time be away from campus participating in off-campus options. Others have instituted financial penalties such as requiring the payment of on-campus fees while the student is away from the campus in order to compensate for the student's absence. These and other such policies aimed at keeping the student and his money are bound to reduce the attractiveness of foreign study for many students.

2. The cost of a year abroad in some locations now exceeds the cost for a year in a relatively expensive American insitution. The most dramatic example of this is in the United Kingdom, where the government mandated increases in tuition, combined with high cost of living, have priced study in the U.K. out of the market for many Americans. Indeed, almost all British institutions of higher learning have registered a decline in the number of Americans attending their institutions since the inception of these policies. American programs have long benefitted from the total lack of or minimal tuition fees abroad. A number of countries are currently reassessing this policy and may soon institute fees for their own students as well as others. Since the cost of living in a number of these areas tends to be relatively expensive, dramatic increases in the cost of the academic program would most certainly have a negative effect on their attractiveness. In addition, one must not forget that in many areas inflation has tended to be higher than in the U.S. For the last several years

this has been compensated for by a very strong dollar, but should the dollar decline to the levels it had reached several years ago, most foreign study programs would be obliged to increase their fees dramatically.

3. Preparation of students. If the object is to integrate the American student into a foreign university, then the student must meet the general requirements and possess sufficient fluency in the host country's language to be able to study at a university. The seemingly continuous decline in level and proficiency of foreign language competence in American institutions is bound to have an affect on the so-called integrated foreign study programs. The alternatives to integrating the students into a foreign institution are of course to set up one's own programs, which are not only more costly but also raise a number of philosophical and educational questions.

4. For some time there has been the strong conviction that American institutions need to expand their links with universities in the Third World. Such arrangements are however expensive and time and energy consuming from an administrative standpoint. Moreover, Third World universities are under terrific pressures from their own nationals for spaces in the universities, further complicating efforts to place American undergraduates directly in these institutions. Selection and preparation of students going to these areas must be undertaken with great care if the students are going to be able to cope with the personal and academic demands made upon them after their arrival abroad. And finally, language preparation here too is an issue, since instruction in many of these universities is in a language other than English.

5. While in the U.S. most institutions are noting a decline in the number of students enrolled, the general tendency overseas is directly opposite: at a time of declining resources, enrollments are increasing. This is likely to be the case for at least the next decade. This means that increasingly places

in all overseas institutions for Americans are going to be at a premium. Numerus clausus (limited or closed enrollment) is already in effect in a number of disciplines in continental universities, a trend that will both continue and expand. American programs and American students must be aware of these developments and take them seriously.

Taken together all of the points which I have listed would seem to indicate that I feel that the next decade for study abroad programs is likely to be a difficult one. It does seem to me that the world wide economic situation and the effects which this has upon education the world over are going to bring about a general period of holding the line and retrenchment rather than rapid expansion. I certainly do not mean to suggest that I believe that there is no longer a place for study abroad programs or that their importance for higher education in the U.S. has in any way declined. Indeed, the world political situation cries out for an expansion of these opportunities so that more of our young people can have the advantages of being exposed to a different culture, language, political and educational system. While there may be many dark spots on the horizon, it is also important to recall the rays of light. Who would have imagined a few years ago that we now could send so many students to study in the Peoples Republic of China? We need to ask ourselves if there are not other opportunities that we have overlooked that could and should be pursued and developed. While I am basically optimistic about the future and am firmly convinced that well-managed and imaginative foreign study programs will continue to operate with success, I believe we must ever be sensitive to the changes that are occurring both at home and aborad and be foresighted and imaginative enough to adapt our programs to the currents of the time. This does not mean that we will dilute the quality or confuse organized tourism with study abroad. It does mean that we will constantly be reassessing what we are

doing to see if it cannot be done better, that we will be alert and open to new opportunities not yet exploited, and that we will be sensitive to the educational, political and economic trends in our host countries and at the institutions which receive our students. With these things in mind, I believe we can approach the next years with a certain degree of optimism and with a plan to meet at the annual convention ten years hence and assess the developments of the past and project those of the future.

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